

Drive In by JoMo3

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Summary:

Mike and Eleven go to see a movie together.

Drive In

July, 1987

It's not a date. It's not a date.

Mike Wheeler kept repeating this in his head as he sat parked outside of the Byers' home. He was here to pick up Eleven, his *friend* , so they could go and see a movie, *Adventures in Babysitting* (her idea, not his).

Not that there wasn't a part of him that *wished* it were a date. But this was El Byers, his best friend, who also happened to be the prettiest girl he knew. So what that he always smiled when he saw her, or that she made him feel he could do anything. Just friends, right?

He began to get out of the car when the front door opened and Eleven Byers, looking oh-so-pretty in a pink, flower-patterned sundress, came out of the house, giving him a smile after she locked the front door behind her.

"Sorry," she said, getting into the passenger side of the car. "I had to feed the dog before I left."

"No, it's, uh, it's okay," Mike said, trying not to stare at his beautiful *friend* . "Um...you look really nice, El."

Her smile widened. "Thank you, Mike."

Friends can say that about each other, right? he thought.

They headed towards the drive-in theater where the movie was playing. El had never been to a drive-in, and wanted to see what it was all about. On the way the two talked about their friends and their summer jobs (El babysat-hence the movie-and worked at the library, while Mike worked as a clerk in a grocery store). They talked

about the campaign they'd had a few days ago, and the school year that had just ended.

"When was the last time you went to a drive in?" she asked him.

Mike sighed. "Probably, like, ten years." He smiled. "The first Star Wars movie. My parents used to take us when we were little, but stopped. My dad doesn't really like going to drive-ins, he prefers the air conditioning in the theater."

She nodded her head as they arrived at the theater. When the commercial for the movie had came on TV almost a week ago, El thought it looked funny and wanted to see it. Lucas, Dustin, and Will had rolled their eyes, saying it looked stupid, but Mike had agreed to seeing it with her. When she'd looked up movie times, she'd come across the Hawkins Drive-In, and didn't understand what it was. After Mike explained what a drive-in theater was, she'd excitedly suggested they go.

Mike's friends, of course, harassed him about his "date" with El, but he'd just shrugged it off, knowing there was nothing romantic about it, just two friends going to the movies (*friends do that, right?*). But as it got closer to the actual day, he'd kept thinking, *Was it a date ?*

Of course, the fact that she looked adorable in that pink dress didn't help.

The two had been friends, *just* friends, since her return three years ago. They hadn't talked about their "moment" in the school lunchroom the night she'd disappeared. And yes, their hands would still find each other's every so often, and yes, they had kissed one other time (the night Eleven returned), but they were just friends. Although Mike would be lying to himself if he didn't admit he wanted more. That could be why he hadn't dated anyone, though there were a few girls who looked his way now.

For her part, El didn't date, either; she claimed she was too busy with babysitting and working to do so. Besides, according to her, the majority of the boys at school were "mouth breathers" anyway. She preferred to hang out with her small group of guys.

After paying for the tickets, Mike found a decent spot to park, and mounted the speaker on the driver's side window. Glancing at his calculator watch, he noticed, "We still have time, if you want popcorn. The movie doesn't start for another fifteen minutes."

She gave him a smile and nodded, and the two climbed out of the car. When they made their way to the concession stand, Mike reached into his wallet and came out with a ten dollar bill. Handing it to El, he said, "I've gotta go to the bathroom. Just get me a Pepsi, okay?"

"Okay," she answered.

After using the facilities, he spent a few moments in the mirror, pushing his moppy hair down and looking himself over; all the while reminding himself it wasn't a date.

Exiting, he figured El must be done by now, but he didn't see her at first. Going back to the concession stand, he saw her, waiting for the popcorn, talking to a boy their age. He felt his chest tighten when he saw who it was.

It was Tommy Douglas, the high school's quarterback. He was known around the school as a jock and a jerk, and Lucas claimed to have once heard him say he wanted to get with El to get another "notch on his belt."

Mike walked quickly to where the duo was. "Hi, Tommy," he said.

Tommy looked him up and down. "Hey, Wheeler. What're you doing here?"

"He's with me," El said.

Tommy snorted. "What, like a date?"

Before Mike could answer, Eleven had gripped his hand in hers. "Yes."

Mike fought the blush that was trying to creep it's way up his neck.

Tommy shook his head. "Yeah, right. Whatever." He turned, and

walked a few feet away to a group of his friends.

“Popcorn?” someone behind them asked, causing Mike to jump, startled.

“Uh, yeah, I guess that’s ours,” he said, letting go of El’s hand and taking the popcorn as El got the soda. The two began walking back to the car.

“I just got one, I figured we could share,” she said, holding up the Pepsi.

“Yeah, that’s fine,” he mumbled.

“Sorry about that.”

“Huh?”

“With Tommy? Saying it was a date?” She shook her head. “He came up to me and started talking right before you came over, asking if I wanted to go to his car.” She rolled her eyes. “Mouth breather. I just wanted to get rid of him.”

“Oh. That’s okay,” he said as they arrived at the car. He opened the passenger side for her, and she gave him a smile as she got in. Closing the door, he saw Tommy and his friends walking to a nearby car, stealing looks at the two of them. Trying to match his stare, Mike climbed in the driver’s side, putting the popcorn between he and El.

Soon after, the movie started, and Mike had to admit, there were some funny moments in it. He would sneak glances at El once in awhile, and she seemed to be enjoying herself, passing the Pepsi between the two of them, giggling at something on the screen. Every so often their hands would touch as they both reached for the popcorn, but Mike tried to not let it get to him.

About halfway through, they were both startled when Tommy leaned on El’s window.

“You two sure don’t look like you’re on a date,” he said to them.

“Leave us alone, Tommy,” Mike said.

He barked out a laugh as he stood back up. Before he left, he told El, "If you *really* want a date, come join me, brown eyes."

El shook her head. When he'd gone back to his car, she said, "Um, maybe we should, you know, *look* like we're on a date." Mike turned to her. "Just to get him to leave us alone, you know?"

"Um, okay. Sure," he said, scooting a little closer. Not sure of what to do, he put his arm around her as she lay her head on his shoulder.

They watched quietly for a few minutes, Mike uncomfortable and comfortable at the same time, reminded of when he and El used to watch movies like this when she'd first returned.

Out of the corner of his eye, Mike saw Tommy, with a determined look on his face, getting out of his car again. "Oh, boy, here he comes," Mike said.

"We should kiss," El said.

"What?" Mike asked, feeling his face flush.

"To really stick it to him," she said.

"Um..."

Tommy was getting closer to their car. Mike turned to El, and the two brought their lips together.

What Mike thought would be a quick peck turned into ten to fifteen seconds of bliss, as El's soft lips touched his own. She brought a hand to his cheek to bring him closer, and his hands moved to her waist as he swore it felt like she was smiling.

They pulled apart, eyes locked on another. A smile came to her lips. "It worked," she said, softly.

"Wh-what?"

She nodded outside. Tommy had thrown his hands up in defeat, slinking back to his car.

“Oh,” Mike said, taking the Pepsi and taking a huge gulp from it. They watched the rest of the movie undisturbed, but with Mike’s arm still around her.

The film ended, and people around them began starting their cars, pulling away into the night. Mike moved his arm from around El, as she scooted back to her side.

“How’d you like it?” she asked.

He nodded his head. “It was better than I thought it’d be. I didn’t like that the jerk ex boyfriend was named Mike.”

She giggled as she looked at the clock on the dashboard. “It’s still kind of early, do you want to go get some ice cream?”

“Okay, sure,” he agreed.

“My treat,” she said. “After you came to my rescue with Tommy.”

So they drove to a nearby ice cream parlor. El paid for their cones, and the two found a corner table to sit at with their dessert, hers strawberry, while his was mint chocolate chip.

“So,” Mike said, “Is babysitting *really* like that?”

She smiled, shaking her head. “Not even close. If it was, I probably wouldn’t do it anymore.” After a moment, she added, “It kind of reminded me about tonight.”

Mike looked confused. “How so?”

“Well,” she said, pausing to take a lick from her ice cream, “Chris’ night didn’t go as she’d planned, and ours kind of didn’t, either,” she said with a blush. “You know, the whole Tommy thing.”

Mike nodded, as he took a bite from his cone. “So...you don’t like him?”

She scrunched her face. “Ew.”

Mike laughed.

"I'm sorry we had to...do all that," she said.

"Do what?"

"The...kissing," she finished, saying the last word quickly.

"Oh. Well, uh, at least it got him to leave us alone, right?"

She nodded, and took a lick of her ice cream. "Can I ask you a question?"

"Sure."

Blushing slightly, she asked, "This wasn't a date, was it?"

Now it was his turn to blush. "No. Why?"

"Just...just wondering."

He finished his cone, then said, "The guys, they kept teasing me about seeing the movie with you tonight."

El rolled her eyes. "Which part? The movie, or that it was just you and me?"

"Both," Mike admitted.

"Should we tell them what we did to scare away Tommy?"

Mike smiled. "Are you kidding? They'd go on for *weeks* if they knew all of that."

They both started laughing.

He drove her back home after that. Parking in front of the house, he walked with her to the door.

"Well, again, thank you for seeing this with me," she said.

"Anytime, El." She stepped up to the door, he stayed a few feet behind. Smiling at each other, he said, "Well, bye. I'll see you tomorrow."

"Goodnight, Mike," she said.

She went to unlock the door and he went to go to his car, when he suddenly turned back around. "Hey, El?"

"Yes?" she asked, spinning around.

On the car ride over, he had debated asking her what he was about to. *This was El. His best friend. Did he really want to open this door?* "Would you, um," he could feel his heart pounding inside his chest, "Would you want to, uh, go on, like, a real date with me, maybe, sometime?"

She gave him a sly grin as she stepped away from the door. "Are you asking me out, Wheeler?"

He gulped. "Um, maybe. It depends on what your answer is."

She walked over, stood on her tiptoes, and kissed his cheek. "Of course I'll go on a date with you, Mike."

His face broke into a grin. "Really?"

"Yes, really."

He walked forward, and wrapped her in a hug.

"Can I admit something to you?" she asked, her voice partially muffled by his chest.

"Yeah."

Pulling apart, she continued. "I...kinda thought this was a date."

He grinned. "Really?"

She nodded her head. "I spent an hour in the bathroom, getting ready, and me and Nancy went out yesterday to get this dress." She

looked at him with a smile. "She didn't know it was for you."

"Oh."

"I just...I wanted to look..."

"Pretty?"

She grinned as she looked at him. "Really pretty."

He took her hands. "El, you're the prettiest girl I know. You *always* look pretty." He sighed. "I kept telling myself it wasn't a date, but I kind of hoped it was."

"Well, it kind of was, wasn't it?" she asked, her face inching towards his.

"I guess," he said, his face moving in as well.

They kissed, and this time they both knew it wasn't going to be just a peck as they pulled each other closer. When it was finished, and their foreheads were resting on one another, Mike asked, "So where would you want to go on an *actual* date?"

She giggled. "Another movie? I remember you said you wanted to see Spaceballs."

"Yeah, and you do owe me," he said, smiling at her. "As long as Tommy isn't there."

"Definitely."

He looked into her eyes, still not believing that she, *El Byers, his best friend*, had agreed to a date with him.

"So...it's a date?" he asked.

"It's a date."